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Cocoa Industry Fails to Deliver on July 1, 2008 Child Labor Commitments

ILRF Releases New Analysis of Industry's Failure to Eliminate Child Labor

The chocolate industry has failed to provide consumers with a reasonable assurance that the chocolate they buy was made without exploited and trafficked child labor. Major chocolate companies signed what is referred to as the Harkin-Engel Protocol in 2001, promising to eliminate the worst forms of child labor from their supply chains, after media stories emerged depicting the widespread use of forced child labor and trafficking on West African cocoa farms. After failing to meet their July 1, 2005 commitments, the Protocol was weakened and extended to July 1, 2008. Once again, the industry has missed the deadline.

Bama Athreya, Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Forum, said, "The major chocolate companies are not able to prove the elimination of exploited child labor in their cocoa supply, nor show concrete improvements in West African farmers' lives. Consumers cannot be assured today that their favorite chocolate candies are made without abusive child labor."

In a new report issued today, titled "The Cocoa Protocol: Success or Failure," the International Labor Rights Forum presented the following findings:

- The original intent of the 'protocol' has not been achieved, and consumers today have no more assurance than they did eight years ago that trafficked or exploited child labor was not used in the production of their chocolate;
- Industry is making false claims regarding certification;
- Industry may be assigning itself too much credit for activities that may in any case have resulted from bilateral and multilateral government engagement;
- 'Verification' has been rendered irrelevant by the fact that the process supported by industry no longer bears any relation to supply chain monitoring or certification;

- Industry-supported programs have not been properly evaluated and therefore the actual impacts of such programs are unknown;
- Industry has not adequately defined what it considers remediation;
- Reports from West Africa point to the continued use of the worst forms of child labor as well as trafficking of children.

The report presents the following recommendations*:

- Companies should establish traceability within their own supply chain to the farm or cooperative level;
- Companies should work through existing initiatives (for example, Fair Trade, Utz Certified and Rainforest Alliance) to develop stronger methodologies for labor standards monitoring and link these systems directly to the government processes with an incentive/sanction system;
- Companies should ensure that their own operations and their supply chains adhere to internationally established codes of practice, including the ILO Tripartite Declaration for Multinational Enterprises and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Corporations;
- The US Government should cease to protect the interests of chocolate companies and instead invest in funding multilateral initiatives through the ILO-IPEC program and through funding for the Education for All initiative, and should support revenue transparency in the cocoa sector.

Tim Newman of ILRF's Campaigns Department stated, "Consumers should reward companies with ethical integrity in their supply chains and continue to demand that world's largest chocolate companies answer the question of how consumers can be assured their chocolate is not produced using exploited child labor."

**Note: Many of these recommendations are supported by the "[Commitment to Ethical Cocoa Sourcing](#)" [3] document which has been endorsed by 60 chocolate companies and organizations.*

The full report can be [read online here](#). [4]

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Source URL: <http://www.laborrights.org/stop-child-labor/cocoa-campaign/news/11639>

Links:

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[2] <mailto:tim.newman@ilrf.org>

[3] <http://www.laborrights.org/stop-child-labor/cocoa-campaign/resources/861>

[4] <http://www.laborrights.org/stop-child-labor/cocoa-campaign/resources/1552>